

Extracts from the CIA Publication,
"An Analysis of the Vietnamese Communists Strengths,
Capabilities and Will to Persist"
dated 26 August 1966

Extracts from the CIA Publication "An Analysis of the Vietnamese Communists' Strengths, Capabilities, and Will to Persist," dated 26 August 1966, Section II, Para. 4, Page 2.

4. This has required a drastic increase in the Communist investment. On a population base of around 18 million, North Vietnam now is supporting a military establishment of at least 400,000 men. By mid-1966 Hanoi was maintaining a force of at least 38,000 North Vietnamese to fight in the South. We estimate that this figure will rise to 60,000 by the end of 1966 and to 75,000 by mid-1967. Furthermore, to sustain its commitment in the struggle, North Vietnam has undergone partial mobilization and has had to divert at least 350,000 laborers to military or war-related tasks. North Vietnam's economy has been dislocated, its transportation system disrupted and the personal lives of its citizens adversely affected. To facilitate the dispatch of troops to South Vietnam and the external supplies they now require, Hanoi has had to develop and maintain an elaborate road and trail network through Laos in the face of continued interdiction and harassment.

Section II, Para. 5, Pages 2 and 3:

5. In South Vietnam, the Communists have developed an insurgent structure which includes an armed force estimated to be around 232,000 in addition to the 38,000 North Vietnamese troops already mentioned. This figure includes Viet Cong Main and Local Force troops, political cadre and combat support elements, and Southern Communist irregulars.

[redacted] the numerical strength of these irregulars (now carried at around 110,000) may require drastic upward revision. To direct the execution of their insurgent campaign, the Communists have developed a party apparatus in the South estimated to number around 100,000 members, supported by a somewhat smaller youth auxiliary.* The Communists have also probably enrolled around 700,000 people in some component of their front organization, the "National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam." This total apparatus must be controlled, funded and supplied, although most of its requirements may be met from resources within South Vietnam.

* Around 25,000 party members and somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 members of the youth auxiliary are thought to be serving in the Communist armed forces. They would be included in the military strength totals already cited. If our estimate of the number of Communist irregulars proves to require upward revision, our estimate of the size of the party apparatus in the South and of its youth auxiliary will also require compensating adjustments. Details on the Communist organization in South Vietnam are available in the [redacted] by [redacted] data [redacted]

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Annex III, Section II, Para. B, Page III-5, III-6 and III-7:

B. Party Numerical Strength

It is possible to make only a rough estimate of current party numerical strength in South Vietnam since the evidence on the subject, mainly in the form of captured Communist membership lists, is extremely fragmentary. No data of significance, for example, are available for the Mekong delta, long a Communist stronghold, where party membership presumably would be high. The problem is further complicated by the covert nature of party membership, even in some Viet Cong-controlled areas, and by the party's failure--which is attested in captured documents--to develop its organization and strength uniformly in all areas.

Fortunately, a firm figure for party membership in the South at the end of 1961 is available to use as a base for current estimates. It comes from a Communist document produced early in 1963 which stated that the party numbered 35,000 members in the South at the end of 1961. This included members in the Viet Cong armed forces. Since this document contained much other accurate information, it is probable that the membership figure is reliable.

Taking this figure as a foundation, we estimate on the basis of evidence contained in captured documents and prisoner interrogation reports that party membership in the South had approximately doubled by mid-1965 and that it stood at around 75,000. The documents and prisoner interrogations suggest that about 25,000 of the party members operated primarily as members of the insurgent armed forces, the bulk of them in the regular main force units.* The remainder, some 50,000, seem to have been mainly concerned with political action, including subversive operations.

* Although party members may make up as much as a third of main force strength, their numbers appear from the documents to decline drastically in the irregular units. As a general rule, the lower the echelon, the fewer the party members. A 1965 document captured in Phu Yen Province, for example, indicated that the percentage of party members in the "village guerrillas" in one district was 13%. The percentage among the "hamlet guerrillas" was 3%. On the basis of such information, we believe

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Captured documents indicate that even before the effects of the US military buildup were felt, party leaders were not satisfied with the party's numerical strength. Since mid-1965 they have put heavy pressure on lower echelons to recruit new members in all areas. If the quotas reflected in many captured documents were applied on a national basis, they could theoretically mean a party membership goal of some 100,000 at the end of 1965, exclusive of party members in Viet Cong regular military units.

Annex III, Section II, Para. C, Page III-8 and III-9:

C. Numerical Strength of the Party Youth Group

Estimating the numerical strength of the party's youth group is even more difficult than that of the regular party itself. Analysis of the few captured documents bearing on the question, however, indicated rather surprisingly that the party youth in the South are fewer in number than full party members. It appears that the party youth group may be around three-fourths the size of the regular party. On this basis, youth group strength in mid-1965 might have been around 55,000 with about 15,000 to 20,000 of these in regular military and support units. Recruitment to expand the youth group was also stressed in 1965, with indications that in some areas it was to be doubled if possible.

We believe this estimate must be treated cautiously until more evidence is available, since the apparent numerical strength of the Communist youth in South Vietnam stands in sharp contrast with the situation in most Communist-controlled countries. In North Vietnam, for example, there are approximately five party youth for every full-time party member. The reasons for the seeming scarcity of party youth in South Vietnam are not readily apparent, although we believe they are probably related primarily to the difficult conditions under which

that party strength in the irregular forces averages less than one party member for every ten guerrillas.

In mid-1965, main force strength was estimated at approximately 55,000. If one third of these were party members, they would number about 18,000. The balance of the 25,000 estimated party members in the military, we believe, were in the irregular units. The total number of party members in the armed forces could be raised somewhat if, in fact, US estimates of irregular strength of the Communist forces are too low. If irregular strength were, for example, around 200,000, it would probably mean that there are an additional 10,000 party members in the South.

the Communists must operate. They may find it hard to encourage the growth of the party youth apparatus given the covert nature of many party operations and the need to engage available youth in military activities as rapidly as possible.

Annex III, Section III, Paras. A and B, Pages III-14, III-15, III-16 and III-17:

III. Numerical Strength of the Communist Political Apparatus in Urban Areas

A. General Position

In the towns and cities, the Communists must operate covertly. The main targets for recruitment both into the covert ranks of the party and its youth group and into the underground of sympathizers are the lower military and civil ranks of the government, the disgruntled, the poor, the unemployed, manual laborers, students, and intellectuals. Documents suggest that the Communists expect few recruits from the practicing members of certain religious and political factions--the "reactionary" Catholics, the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the "reactionaries" among the Buddhists.

Fragmentary documentary evidence is available on the extent of the underground in the cities. Analysis of this limited amount of material suggests that while the underground is pervasive, it still falls far short of Communist hopes--partly in terms of the calibre of those recruited. Available evidence also indicates that the party has long regarded its over-all political apparatus as weak in the urban areas, and that it has steadily exhorted its cadre to greater recruiting efforts.* The added recruiting efforts have partially involved the dispatch of party members and agents from the rural areas to the cities for proselyting activities.**

* In February 1966, a captured summation of a high-level logistics conference held by COSVN revealed that the Viet Cong considered the element of their apparatus which served to procure supplies in the markets of the government-held cities inadequate. According to the summation, this operation must increase "threefold" during 1966 to meet "requirements in 1967 during the rainy season." The conference reported that "we have almost no cadre operating in the cities; the purchase of goods is mostly done through intermediaries," and it recommended strenuous recruiting efforts.

** Full analysis of the success of this effort must await further evidence, but there is already fragmentary material suggesting that it has been at least partially successful. For example, the party committee for the capital of Binh Duong Province, which borders the heavily populated Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh Special Zone to the north, reported at the end of 1965 that it had succeeded during the year in planting in the urban areas 99 new agents who had turned in 150 intelligence reports.

B. Numerical Strength in Saigon and Environs

In the Viet Cong's Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh Special Zone which comprises the Saigon metropolitan area and its surrounding rural sectors, it appears from the documentary evidence that by mid-1965 some 24,000 people were controlled or primarily influenced by the Communists.*** This would have

*** A document of mid-1965, for example, consisted of a chart compiling the party's personnel assets in this zone, which covers an area of at least 2.5 million inhabitants. Since a marginal notation by the Communist compiler states that "several cadres have not yet reported," it cannot be considered a complete accounting. Nonetheless, it may have included most of the regularly available political assets controlled by the party committee of the Zone; it probably did not include a far smaller number reporting directly to COSVN or to Hanoi, nor does it appear to have included the very low level agents or informants used for the gathering of intelligence. As "internal" assets (presumably those living and working, either "legally" or "illegally," in the metropolitan areas) the chart lists:

Party Members-----	305
Youth Group-----	133
"Backbone Agents"-----	238
Sympathizers-----	1,416
"Active Agents"-----	48
Liberation Association-----	343
Liaison Agents-----	22
TOTAL	2,505

Analysis of the total document suggests that of the 1,416 "sympathizers," 368 were involved in preparing or disseminating propaganda, 600 were students or teachers, 125 were government employees or were looked to for proselyting among government employees.

In addition to the party and youth members presumably operating in the Saigon metropolitan area, the document suggests that in the more rural areas of the zone at least an additional 3,300 party and 2,300 Youth Group members were active. Of those operating in the rural areas, however, almost 2,000 were subordinate to the Military Affairs Committee of the Zone, and most of these probably were assigned to the regular military units operating in the Zone as the party's armed terrorist and "armed propaganda" muscle.

meant that slightly under one percent of the total population of the Saigon metropolitan area was committed in one extent or another to the insurgent cause. Approximately 6,000 of these supporters were party and party youth, many of them in the Viet Cong armed forces in the rural area of the Zone. In addition to party personnel, the insurgents counted nearly 16,000 members of the Front in the Zone in early 1965.* Almost all of these individuals resided in the rural districts adjacent to Saigon.

The evidence is not adequate to make a numerical estimate of Viet Cong assets in the other major cities of South Vietnam. The impression conveyed by the fragmentary material, however, is that the insurgent political strength in the other cities is no stronger proportionally than in the Saigon area and its environs, except possibly in Hue.**

Available evidence clearly indicates that the party has long regarded its over-all political apparatus as weak in the urban areas.

Annex III, Section IV, Pages III-17 and III-18:

IV. Strength of the Political Apparatus in Rural Areas: A Sample

Several captured documents of the party's district committee in Hoai Nhon, the northern coastal district of Binh Dinh Province, provide some idea of the numerical strength of the insurgent political apparatus which might have been found in a largely Viet Cong area outside the delta in mid-1965. In January 1965, this district had a population of about 170,000. Except for the immediate area of the district town, it was in Viet Cong hands. Prior to 1954, the area had been a Viet Minh stronghold. It is a largely Buddhist region, with a Catholic minority and a history of Catholic-Buddhist friction. As of mid-1965, there were 100,000 refugees in Binh Dinh, 40,000 of them Catholic.

* These were broken down into nearly 9,000 liberation farmers, about 1,500 liberation youth, and about 5,500 liberation women.

** Although no numerical figures on political assets in Hue have been turned up, the success of the Communists in infiltrating and influencing the "struggle movement" there in April and May suggests that the Communists may have obtained a better foothold in this area than in other urban regions. There are indications, for example, that a substantial element of Communist sympathizers exists among the student body at Hue University where a variety of influences, many of them extremist in nature, operate on the students. A number of prominent politicians and teachers in Hue have been active in anti-government, anti-military movements in the past two years.

In mid-June 1965, the District Committee reported that exclusive of any troops and cadres responsive to higher headquarters, there were slightly over 20,000 party and NFSLV members in the district.* This was nearly 13 percent of the total estimated population of the district prior to the large outflow of refugees from the area.**

Another document indicated that the party had called for a big step up in recruitment in the district by the end of the year which would, if achieved, have at least doubled party membership and more than doubled Youth Group membership. Later documents during the year, however, indicated a preoccupation with "enemy" military activities in the district and suggested that development of the party was not meeting requirements.

* They were composed of:

596	party members (apparently including 136 cadre and men organic to the district party headquarters)
447	Party Youth Group members
4,033	Liberation Farmers Association members
6,143	Liberation Youths
<u>10,869</u>	Liberation Women
22,038	TOTAL

** The NFSLV members amounted to about 18-20% of the population estimated to be over 16 in the Province. Military units under the district committee included a regular unit of 208 men, 12 village guerrilla platoons totalling 338 members, and an additional unspecified number of smaller hamlet guerrilla units--apparently in at least 68 hamlets. Many of those in the military units were probably also members of the party, the Youth Group, or the Liberation Association.

C. VC/NVA

1. Forces - General

The composition and size of the Communist force in South Vietnam has changed considerably since 1964. The total enemy strength has grown from approximately 127,000 in 1964, to 269,000 by mid-1966, and we estimate that it may reach 310,000 by June 1967. Nearly 37,000 regular North Vietnamese Army troops have joined enemy ranks in South Vietnam since mid-1965. The continued infiltration of North Vietnamese troops has been the primary source of increased Communist troop strength in South Vietnam. The comparative and future estimated growth in enemy forces is illustrated in Table IV-5 below:

Table IV-5

South Vietnam: Estimated NVA/VC Forces,
December 1964 - Mid-1967

	(In thousands)				
	1964*	1965	1966*	December 1966	June 1967
North Vietnam	---	11.0	38.0	60.0	75.0
VC Main Force	34.0	59.0	63.0	65.0	65.0
Irregulars**	93.0	110.0	110.0	110.0	110.0
Political Cadre, Combat Support	---	57.0	58.0	60.0	60.0
Total Enemy	127.0	237.0	269.0	295.0	310.0

*End of year strengths with exception of June 1966.

**These are the currently accepted irregular figures but, as indicated in the Summary Discussion, these figures are being re-examined and may be subject to upward revision.

2. Deployment

Current North Vietnamese troop strength is primarily centered in II Corps area, and to a much lesser extent in I and III Corps area. No appreciable numbers of NVA troops are known to be in IV Corps. VC main force

strength is heavily concentrated in III and IV areas and to a lesser extent in II and I Corps areas. A more detailed deployment is shown in Table IV-6 below:

Table IV-6

South Vietnam: Estimated Strength, Composition and
Deployment of NVA/VC Main Force Elements by Corps Area,*
Mid-1966

	NVA	VC	Total
I Corps	10,000	8,800	18,800
II Corps	23,500	12,500	36,000
III Corps	4,500	23,300	27,800
IV Corps	<u>Neg</u>	<u>18,400</u>	<u>18,400</u>
Total	38,000	63,000	101,000

*Excludes some 170,000 irregulars, political cadre and combat support forces. Combat support forces are about 15 percent of regular forces strength.

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Annex V, Appendix A, Section I, Para. A, Pages V-9 and V-10

A. Personnel

Enemy forces in South Vietnam in mid-1966 amounted to 260,000-280,000 including from 40,000-50,000 personnel engaged in logistic support. The composition of important VC supply elements is shown in the following tabulation:

Combat Support

Separate Military Transport Units	5,800
Region/Province/District Ordnance and Ammunition Sections	3,000
Other Combat Support Troops	8,800
Total	17,600

Other Forces

Finance and Economic Transport Units	2,000
Infiltration Corridor Personnel	3,000
Communications and Liaison Units	2,000
Organic Military Transport Elements	7,400
VC/NVA Crewmen on Water Craft	12,000
Total	26,400
TOTAL	44,000

In addition to these regular employees the VC have conscripted thousands of temporary, civilian workers to assist in logistic activities. Recruiting is carried out among men between the ages of 18 and 50 and women between the ages of 20 and 41, with the annual period of service usually being from 1 to 3 months. This conscripted labor is given both political and security training. It is then organized into platoons and companies, and assigned by village and district forward supply councils to the combat units or to a rear services staff. Front line or Class A laborers are used by combat units to transport ammunition and food supplies; to evacuate battle casualties; to remove captured supplies to collection points, and to construct supply depots and defensive positions, as well as in other miscellaneous tasks. Local inhabitants have been conscripted to carry weapons and ammunition inland from coastal areas and to transport food to the mountainous regions. Special groups are assigned to carry supplies and ammunition from the Cambodian border area to enemy base areas.